

Message Text

SECRET

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43

ACTION NEA-06

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NSC-05 NSCE-00 INR-05 CIAE-00

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R 230800Z SEP 76

FM USINT BAGHDAD

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3649

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

S E C R E T BAGHDAD 1391

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, IZ

SUBJECT: TRANSITION OF POWER WITHIN IRAQI REGIME

1. ACCORDING TO USUALLY WELL INFORMED USINT SOURCE, PRESIDENT BAKR HAS DECIDED THAT FOR REASONS OF HEALTH HE MUST STEP DOWN AS CHAIRMAN OF THE RCC AND PRESIDENT OF IRAQ. (SEE BAGHDAD 1329.) SOURCE SAID THAT RCC WAS CONVENED AT 9 P.M. ON SEPTEMBER 21 FOLLOWED BY MEETING OF THE REGIONAL COMMAND AND A SECOND MEETING OF THE RCC AT MIDNIGHT. SOURCE BELIEVES THAT MEETINGS WERE CALLED TO DISCUSS ARRANGEMENTS FOR A BAATH PARTY CONGRESS. CONGRESS WOULD ELECT A NEW REGIONAL COMMAND AND ESTABLISH NEW RULES FOR MEMBERSHIP IN VARIOUS OFFICES OF THE RCC AND REGIONAL COMMAND. ACCORDING TO SOURCE, SADDAM HUSSEIN HOPES TO SET UP A NEW RCC WITH HIMSELF AS

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CHAIRMAN AND WITH THREE VICE-CHAIRMAN ONE EACH FOR

INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT, INTERNAL AFFAIRS, AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS. LEADING CANDIDATES FOR THE THREE VICE-CHAIRMANSHIPS ARE TAHA JAZRAWI, IZZAT DOURI, AND IZZAT MUSTAFA, ALL OF WHOM ARE MEMBERS OF THE EXISTING RCC. PARTY CONGRESS WOULD ALSO BE ASKED TO CHANGE THE RULE WHICH NOW REQUIRES THAT EITHER CHAIRMAN OR VICE-CHAIRMAN OF RCC BE A PROFESSIONAL MILITARY MAN.

2. TRANSITION OF POWER IN A HIGHLY CENTRALIZED POLITICAL SYSTEM SUCH AS IRAQ'S INEVITABLY BRINGS A PERIOD OF UNCERTAINTY AND TENSION. SADDAM HUSSEIN, HOWEVER, SEEMS TO BE IN FULL CONTROL ALTHOUGH A QUESTIONMARK REMAINS CONCERNING HIS STANDING WITH THE LEADERSHIP OF THE ARMED FORCES. OUR ESTIMATE IS THAT HE HAS HAD ENOUGH TIME TO ESTABLISH SEVERAL NETWORKS OF SUPPORTERS AND INFORMERS WITHIN THE ARMED FORCES AND THAT THESE SHOULD BE ADEAQUATE TO INSURE THE LOYALTY OF THE MILITARY. AS A SAFEQUARD, HOWEVER, MOST MILITARY UNITS IN BAGHDAD HAVE BEEN ON LOW-LEVEL ALERT FOR SEVERAL MONTHS AND THE REGIME IS REPORTEDLY TAKING SPECIAL MEASURES TO BOLSTER THE MORALE OF THE TROOPS ON THE SYRIAN BORDER INCLUDING DAILY SHIPMENTS OF HARD-TO-FIND FRUITS AND VEGETABLES AND A STEADY STREAM OF MOVIES NOT AVAILABLE TO IRAQ'S GENERAL PUBLIC.
WILEY

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NNN

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